

GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND ITS STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE IN THE MODERN ERA: A REVIEW AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This research proposes a conceptual of green human resource management and its strategic importance in the modern era: a review and research framework

Design/methodology/approach: This conceptual article emphasizes on aligning the intended – implemented gap on GHRM and proposes a new research framework for green HRM as a strategic advantage with the propositions to be validated by the future researchers. Green HRM is a source of strategic advantage and it requires a detailed review with updated literature on the current situation. Current study would fulfill this gap.

Findings: There is no doubt that GHRM is an emerging concept and its importance has increased even more after the occurrence of COVID – 19. One reason for it is that GHRM focuses on the external environment as well especially in the GHRM practice of green health and safety. This practice needs more work to be done in future as well. It is also important because of the strategic importance for the organizations due to due to an increased focus on sustainability in general and environmental sustainability in particular. Apart from satisfying the stakeholders', organizations can comply with the regulatory requirements through GHRM. Past research has proved it that GHRM practices enhance the individual and organizational performance as well.

Research limitations/implications: This research is in conceptual research level.

Practical implications: State your implication here. This article could be used as next research references. It is desired that future researchers may explore the intended – implemented gap on GHRM. Along with that, the propositions of the research model given in this study may be tested by the future researchers for validation purpose. There is also a need for testing the proposed model and proposition of this article in context of different cultures, organizational context and for geographical replication as well.

Originality/value: Past research does not make it clear that how much of initiative on green HRM is taken by organizations with ISO 14001 certification which is internationally acknowledged certification of organizational efforts for better environment. This article describes this condition.

Paper type: Conceptual article

Keyword: Sustainability, Green HRM, Triple bottom line approach

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I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability is a term which emphasizes that businesses should equally focus on the three aspects of the triple bottom line approach, i.e. people, profit and planet, instead of the earlier bottom line concept of focusing only on the profit which remained dominant till mid 1990s (Ramcilovic-Suominen & Pülzl, 2018). Emphasis of sustainability on planet is of major interest for the researchers like those in the domain of Green

HRM (Yong, Yusliza, Ramayah, & Fawehinmi, 2019). Hence, such organizational efforts have become a source of competitive advantage for the organizations (Osland & Osland, 2007). The concept of sustainable development is being rapidly adopted throughout the world and organizations are also playing their part. The establishment of the 17 sustainable development goals by the United Nations Organization (UNO) sets a benchmark for the countries and large-scale organizations (United Nations, 2015). Organizations are aware about the need for environmental-friendly policies and practices as a source of competitive advantage (Ahmad, 2015). Brundtland Report which was published at the end of 1980s, defined sustainable development as “the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, 1987).

Countries around the world belonging to both the developed and developing economies (e.g. China, Malaysia, Brazil, India, UK and USA) have realized the need for organizations to contribute for the broader issue of environmental sustainability through effective climate action programs. There is evidence that those organizations that adopted green business practices in line with the spirit of sustainability were able to yield better financial results Alkhateeb, Alkahtani, & Mahmood (2018) ; O'Donohue & Torugsa (2016). This makes the workplace more productive and more adaptable for the employees (Teixeira, Jabbour, & Jabbour, 2012); (Liebowitz, 2010). Furthermore, the international environmental certifications for the organizations like in ISO 14000 series, have become a source of motivation for managers to engage in environmental sustainability. The application of green organizational functions such as green production, green HRM, green marketing, green supply chain management and green accounting got popularity as strategic advantage and as the social responsibility measures. This caused an intellectual stimulation for organizational researchers to conduct research on these functions (Musluk & Uygur, 2015).

Different researchers in the past have defined green HRM (GHRM). For example, green HRM is about the policies, practices and systems that encourage employees for pro-environmental activities for the benefit of the individual, society, natural environment and the business (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014). GHRM has different practices which are the same as traditional HRM but with the added emphasis of environmental sustainability in HRM practices. Jose Chiappetta Jabbour (2011) defined GHRM as the extent of greening the human resource management practices with respect to competitive and functional dimensions of traditional HRM. Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices also contribute towards better environmental performance of the organizations (Tang, Chen, Jiang, Paillé, & Jia, 2018); (Kim, Kim, Choi, & Phetvaroon, 2019). Employees tend to adopt those GHRM practices for the greater goal of sustainable development (Tang et al., 2018). Other aspects, such as internal organizational initiatives through human capital for better environment and also the guidance of leadership for the implementation of green practices come under GHRM (Ahmad, 2015); (Tang et al., 2018); (Golicic & Smith, 2013). There are different GHRM practices like green recruitment & selection, green training, green involvement, green performance management, green rewards and compensation etc. that can help to attain the goal of environmental sustainability (Manzoor, Wei, Bányai, Nurunnabi, & Subhan, 2019); (Shah, 2019); (Tang et al., 2018).

Santana & Lopez-Cabrales (2019) highlighted leadership, HRM practices and innovation as the key factors that may help in achieving the greater agenda of environmental sustainability. Similarly, measuring green psychological climate with reference to GHRM has been stressed in the past research (Khan, Jianguo, Ali, Saleem, & Usman, 2019). Studies have linked GHRM practices with organizational citizenship behaviour towards (OCB) as the outcome variable Pham, Tučková, & Chiappetta Jabbour (2019) Green transformational leadership can be the moderating variable for this research. Past studies have shown that green transformational leadership has a positive influence on OCBE (Mi et al., 2019). Hence, it would be tested as a moderator between GHRM practices. Similarly, past studies have shown green psychological climate as a mediating variable for GHRM practices (Khan et al., 2019) ; (Norton, Zacher, & Ashkanasy, 2014). Current study makes this proposition that green psychological climate would enhance green organizational identity, hence, green psychological climate can be the mediating variable for all the practices of GHRM in this proposed research framework.

Outcome variables for this study are “green organizational identity” and “organizational citizenship behaviour towards environment”. Research gaps for this study have been addressed keeping in view the studies conducted recently (Kim et al., 2019); (Pham et al., 2019). Of late, GHRM scholars have highlighted the need for addressing issues of GHRM research through mixed methods research studies (Tang et al., 2018); (Jabbour & Renwick, 2018). Social identity theory has been proposed as the overarching theory for this study particularly with respect to this model. Primarily, social identity theory states that organizational members feel proud and honoured while working for the organizations with unique and distinctive characteristics. Luu (2018) emphasized the need to check the extent of implemented GHRM practices and also the ways and means that support or create hindrance for GHRM measures for the organizations.

It is crucial to consider the gap among intended and implemented HRM practices as it may halt the performance in the organizations (Luu, 2018). Same applies to green HRM (GHRM) as the practices in

GHRM are of traditional HRM but with the added focus on environmental sustainability. Factors associated with GHRM such as exploration of intended – implemented GHRM gap is totally missing in the entire body of knowledge on green HRM. Therefore, for testing a quantitative research model, identification of organizations that have actually implemented GHRM practices would be the key. For this purpose, selection of ISO 14001 certified organizations is the best possible option as industrial certification of ISO 14001 is purely linked with the environmental performance of the organization. This requires protocols such as environmental audit in line with certification like green training, green audit, deputing specific human resources for environmental issues etc. The current study gives useful propositions based on a research framework and those propositions can be validated by the future researchers.

A. Literature Review

Evidence in the literature supports the emergence of Green Human Resource Management in the later part of 1990s (Macke & Genari, 2019). Later on, United Nations Organization (UNO) presented the idea of millennium development goals which in 2015 were renamed as seventeen sustainable development goals (United Nations, 2015), out of which, climate action for environmental sustainability was one of the important goals. Similarly, other UN sustainable development goals such as life on land are linked with effective climate action not only by a layman and governments but by the organizations as well. Organizations also started putting in their efforts for environmental sustainability, which helped a lot in the subsequent emergence of GHRM. However, significant development on GHRM can be observed in the last ten years (Yong et al., 2019).

Organizational effort for achieving the greater goal of environmental sustainability is also a source of strategic advantage (Riordan, Gatewood, & Bill, 1997). Therefore, GHRM, as part of the sustainability initiatives of the organizations, requires the ability and motivation of the employees (Jackson, Renwick, Jabbour, & Muller-Camen, 2011); (Renwick, Redman, & Maguire, 2013). Hence, GHRM gains more importance as it can be used as a strategic initiative and as a policy level priority for the organizations (Ahmad, 2015). Many studies on GHRM have been conducted in the past on manufacturing industries (Kumar Gupta, Gupta, & Gayathiri, 2018); (Yong & Mohd-Yusoff, 2016) ; (Yong et al., 2019) mainly due to their extra pollution (Seth, Shrivastava, & Shrivastava, 2016). However, recently researchers have increased the focus on GHRM research in the service sectors too. Researchers have also emphasized the need for mixed methods studies on GHRM (Pham et al., 2019).

Kura (2016) explained that environmentally specific transformational leadership makes a positive impact on employees green behaviour at work. It also contributes to the greater environmental concern. Logically, employees' green behaviour at work can be due to compensation or that green behaviour can be a volunteer act. Hence, it can be stated that OCBE towards environment can be a positive outcome of green transformational leadership. Mi et al. (2019) explained that a positive relationship exists between green transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour towards environment. It was also stated that transformational leadership in context of eastern culture has a unique moral component as well. As per social learning theory, subordinates imitate their supervisors. OCBE is a non-paid work of employees for the betterment of environment, hence transformational leadership is more likely to support it. However, as per researcher's knowledge, there is no research available on ISO 14001 certified companies for testing the influence of green transformational leadership as a moderator on GHRM practices for the outcome variables of OCBE. Current study will fulfill this gap too. Furthermore, transformational leadership is more likely to take support green initiatives.

Most of the research variables related to psychological and cognitive aspects in context of organizational efforts for better environment have been used as mediating variables in the past. For example, Mi et al. (2019) used psychological ownership as the mediating variable between transformational leadership and OCBE. Similarly, the variable of green psychological climate has been used in the past research as a mediating variable in the research related to GHRM and organizational efforts for sustainability. Green psychological climate can be explained as the common understanding of employees that environmental policies and procedures of the organization enhance environmental sustainability and green values (Khan et al., 2019); (Norton et al., 2014). In the current research, green psychological climate would explain the relationship of GHRM practices with the organizational identity. Green organizational identity would be the outcome of GHRM practices as proposed in the current research due to mediating effect of green psychological climate. So, it is quiet understandable that green psychological climate would enhance feeling of pride and attachment in the employees which also gets support from the underpinning social identity theory for a related outcome variable of green organizational identity.

In the developing countries' context such as in Pakistan, few companies have green certifications like that of sustainability and ISO 14001 while few don't have ISO 14001 certification. Past research does not make it clear that how much of initiative on green HRM is taken by organizations with ISO 14001

certification which is internationally acknowledged certification of organizational efforts for better environment.

B. Literature Gaps

Green Transformational Leadership: Chang, Chen, Luan, & Chen (2019) identified that future researchers should check different leadership styles and psychological factors in green management research. In the current study, researcher will test “green transformational leadership” as a moderator and “green psychological climate” as a mediating variable along with another green outcome, i.e. green organizational identity. As per researcher’s knowledge, there is no previous study that tested the impact of green transformational leadership as a moderating variable on OCBE as the outcome of GHRM in ISO 14001 certified companies.

Proposition 1: Green transformational leadership plays a moderating role between green selection and organizational citizenship behavior.

Proposition 2: Green transformational leadership plays a moderating role between green training and organizational citizenship behavior.

Green Psychological Climate: (Tang et al., 2018) stressed the importance of studying “green psychological climate”. Hence, it would be one of the variables in the current study. Previously, Khan et al. (2019) used green psychological climate as a mediator for a different kind of model having gender as a moderator. Jabbour & Renwick (2018) stressed the need for studying values and believes that may explain organizational and staff behaviour. In view of that context; researcher has noted that environmental value orientation and other cognitive aspects of workforce may well be explained through the in-depth analysis of green psychological climate as a mediating variable for this study.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour towards Environment: Pham et al. (2019) conducted a study in Vietnam and recommended replication of their model including the role of green compensation in other countries’ context. A previous study Luu (2018) also mentioned the importance of green reward. One outcome variable of those studies was OCBE that would be used in the current study. Khan et al. (2019) conducted a study in China and recommended that future research should study environmental citizenship behavior in other contexts. Hence, the current research aims at exploring this phenomenon in ISO 14001 certified organizations of Pakistan.

Proposition 3: Green psychological climate plays the role of mediating variables in the relationship between green selection and green organizational identification.

Proposition 4: Green psychological climate plays the role of mediating variables in the relationship between green training and green organizational identification.

Proposition 5: Green psychological climate plays the role of mediating variables in the relationship between green compensation and green organizational identification.

Proposition 6: Green psychological climate plays the role of mediating variables in the relationship between green performance appraisal and green organizational identification.

Proposition 7: Green psychological climate plays the role of mediating variables in the relationship between green labor relations and green organizational identification.

Green Organizational Identity: Song, Ren, & Yu (2019) conducted a study on multiple industries in China for measuring green organizational identity. Current study would consider ISO 14001 certified companies for measuring green organizational identity as an outcome variable.

Following are the research questions of this study,

1. How does exploring the intended - implemented gap on GHRM help in distinguishing those organizations that have actual GHRM practices from those that have just the intended goals for GHRM?

2. How do the green HRM practices impact on the outcome variables of green organizational identification and green organizational citizenship behavior through the mediating role of green psychological climate and moderating role of green transformational leadership?

As this is a conceptual and theoretical working paper, hence, the propositions have not been tested here. However, future researchers are encouraged to test thesis proposal and work on the above mentioned research questions.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Definition of Variables

Green HRM: Green HRM can be defined as “the policies, practices, and systems that make employees of the organization green for the benefit of the individual, society, natural environment, and the business” (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014). Green HRM comprises of six practices which include job description, recruitment, selection, training, performance assessment, and reward (Renwick et al., 2013); (Jose Chiappetta Jabbour, 2011). Later on, scholars have cited green job specification and green job description under green job design and analysis. Other practices such as green health & safety and green labour relations have also been discussed by few scholars (Piaw, 2014).

Green Recruitment & Selection: Attracting, identifying and hiring of employees having knowledge and experience of environmental practices as a source of identity for that organization (Brekke & Nyborg, 2008).

Green Training: Inculcation of environmental knowledge, skills and abilities in the employees through in-house and specialized training activities for learning of employees (Pham et al., 2019).

Green Performance Management: Green performance management is meant for shaping employees' behaviour for a performance in line with organizations' environmental goals (Renwick et al., 2013).

Green Compensation: Green compensation is the reward structure for green performance of employees in the organization (Jackson et al., 2011).

Green Labor Relations: This represents the green assistance programs including socialization and a positive structure for whistle blowing on green issues (Pham et al., 2019).

Green Transformational Leadership: Such leadership inspires the employees through value driven behaviours for achieving long term organizational goals of environmental sustainability (Wang, Zhou, & Liu, 2018).

Green Psychological Climate: It is the common understanding of employees' that the environmental policies and procedures of the organization enhance environmental sustainability and green values (Khan et al., 2019); (Norton et al., 2014).

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour towards Environment It is employees' volunteer attitude and behaviour towards betterment of natural environment (Boiral, 2009). Pro-environmental HR practices contribute positively towards OCBE (Paillé, Chen, Boiral, & Jin, 2014). Specifically, the green training. Similarly, other GHRM practices contribute positively towards OCBE (Pham et al., 2019).

Green Organizational Identity: Organizational green identity can be defined as an interpretive scheme about environmental management and protection that members collectively construct in order to provide meaning to their behaviors (Chen, 2011); (Song et al., 2019).

B. Flow Chart of the Proposed Research Framework

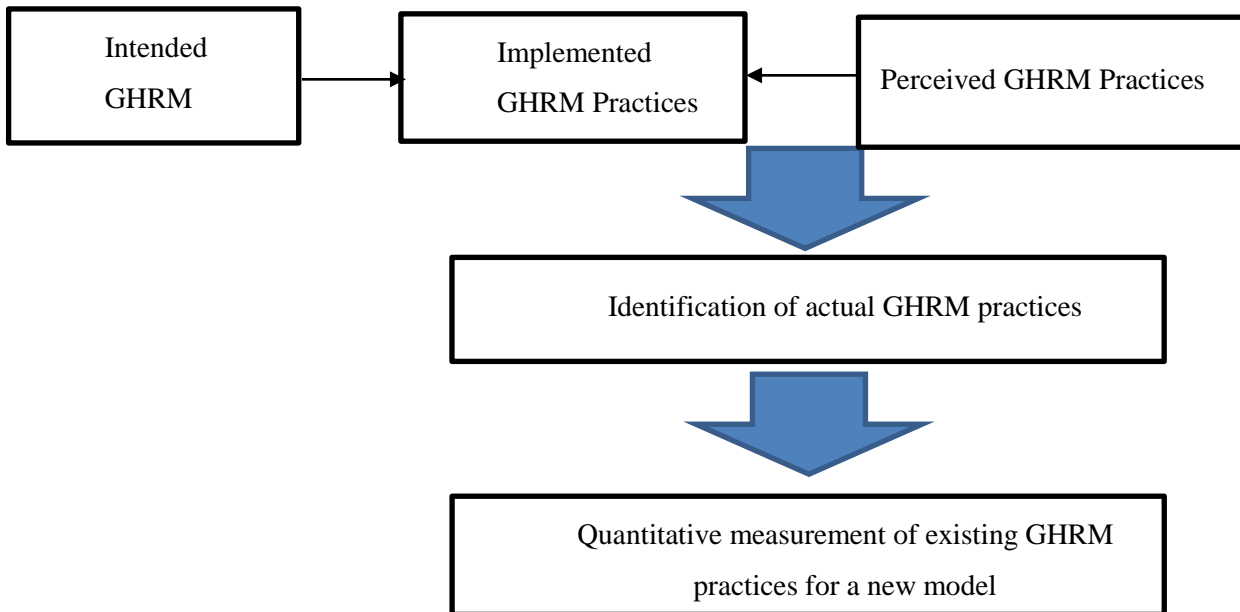


Figure 1. Flow chart of the proposed research framework

It is crucial to consider the gap among intended and implemented HRM practices as it may halt the performance of the organizations (Boiral, 2009). Researcher believes that the same logic applied for green HRM (GHRM). The logic behind it is that often the top management in the organizations intends to implement GHRM but the perceptions of implementation, expertise and consensus remains an issue. But, if a consensus is developed for a collective perception of GHRM for the implementation with the decision of top management, then it also helps in the identification of most relevant GHRM practices in the organization and this helps leaders for actual implementation of GHRM in the organizations. Based on these logical points, following propositions are useful for validation by the future researchers.

Proposition 8: Intentions of top management help in implementing GHRM practices in the organization.

Propositions 9: Top management in the organizations develops perceptions about implemented GHRM based cost and benefit analysis at the individual and organizational level.

Proposition 10: After making an attempt to implement GHRM practices, managers evaluate the effectiveness and try to find out that with practices are actually implemented.

Proposition 11: With the identification of actually identified practices in model 1, researchers can tested the conceptual research frame given as figure 2.

C. Role of Established Theories in Deductive Research on GHRM

A theoretical framework helps explaining a phenomenon by providing hypothesis that what may possibly occurs for a particular reason that needs explanation (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). As green human resource management is an emerging area of research and practice, hence, there is need for more theoretical debate on it. Few underpinning theories that can be elaborated for GHRM related research include institutional theory, paradox theory, theory of planned behavior, open system theory, social identity theory and social cognitive theory. Apart from theory testing in the deductive research, there is need for inductive approach as well for theory development.

It is also important to specify specific leadership styles and socio-psychological behaviors at the workplace that would help in better explaining GHRM with a theoretical lens. However, previous research has established the importance of leadership involvement for adoption of GHRM practices (Ren, Tang, & E.

Jackson, 2018). Social identity theory is also another useful theory for research on GHRM. Social identity is a perceived self-concept of an individual which is derived from a group membership like an employee is the member of his or her organization. Social identity theory was originally presented by John Turner and Tajfel in 1970s. This theory also elaborates if an organization changes its identity then this may also change the members behaviour in the favour of the new identity (Reicher, Haslam, Spears, & Reynolds, 2012). Social identity theory explains the collective identity and organizational pride of the members for their affiliation with an organization and its strategic actions for the betterment of society along with business actions. Hence, there is need for testing social identity theory with respect to the framework of this study along with many other the testing of many other established theories.

D. Conceptual Framework / Model for Research

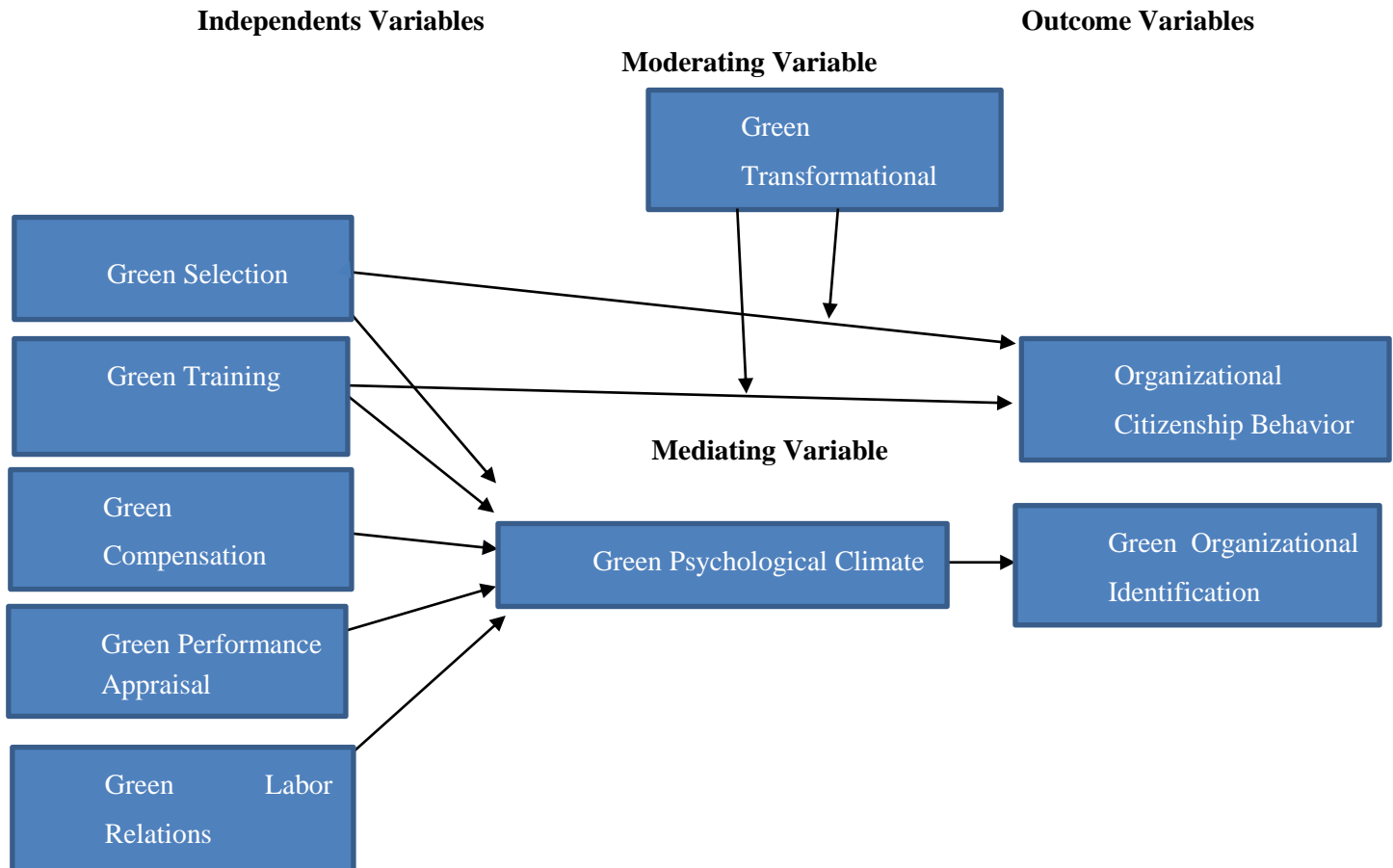


Figure 2. Proposed research framework for this research. All proposed propositions are positive.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Many studies on GHRM have been conducted in the past on manufacturing industries (Kumar Gupta et al., 2018) ; (Yong & Mohd-Yusoff, 2016) ; (Yong et al., 2019). The key justification was that most of the polluting industries are manufacturing industries such as the cement producers in south Asia (Seth et al., 2016). There has been no study in the past on assessing the managerial intentions of GHRM and subsequent implementation in the organizations especially those that are ISO 14001 certified. Finding this can help in knowing that which GHRM practices are being intended and which are actually implemented along with the logic for choosing the specific GHRM over others in the organizations and then measuring the actually implemented GHRM practices in the organizations. Hence, this way, this study would significantly contribute to the existing body of knowledge on GHRM.

With the increased awareness on global warming, de-merits of industrialization, industrial waste, plastic use, air pollution, smog and diseases such as many types of cancers and pandemics like Corona viruses have

given an intellectual stimulation to the governments and scholars of many countries to engage organizations for relevant measures of corporate social responsibility and sustainable business with the use of organizational functions such as green HRM. Similar environmental problems are faced by Pakistan. Foreign funding to the developing governments, international commitments such as Paris agreement and sustainable development goals of UNO are the other motivators for scholars and practitioners in Asia. It is the need of the hour that Pakistani academic researchers should also engage in green HRM research in collaboration with industry to further strengthen governmental measures like billion tree campaign and green Pakistan initiatives through research and policy measures with reference to green HRM. Pakistani government is playing its part for achieving the goals of environmental sustainability through different measures (Jamal, 2019). However, organizations are the building blocks of a society and can play a major role for positively contributing through GHRM research.

A. Managerial Implications and Future Direction

Research in the past has proved that GHRM saves organizational cost through different means like motivating employees for recycling, plantation, use of digital means of communication, reducing road traffic, water and electricity conservation etc. (Mishra, 2017). There is evidence that different practices can be adopted in the workplace through managerial initiatives that helps in motivation of employees. For example, an agenda for the top management might be to have the overall green practices resulting in the better societal image of the organization. Natural resources are continuously reducing and triple bottom line approach emphasizes on saving them for the future generations. Environmental hazards and global warming have become global phenomena. Pakistan is one of those countries that are on the frontline to face the challenges of global warming. So, apart from a layman, organizations can significantly contribute in reducing environmental pollution and the detrimental effects of pollution through GHRM activities. World over, research on GHRM is being conducted.

It is desired that future researchers may explore the intended – implemented gap on GHRM. Along with that, the propositions of the research model given in this study may be tested by the future researchers for validation purpose. There is also a need for testing the proposed model and proposition of this article in context of different cultures, organizational context and for geographical replication as well.

IV. CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that GHRM is an emerging concept and its importance has increased even more after the occurrence of COVID – 19. One reason for it is that GHRM focuses on the external environment as well especially in the GHRM practice of green health and safety. This practice needs more work to be done in future as well. It is also important because of the strategic importance for the organizations due to an increased focus on sustainability in general and environmental sustainability in particular. Apart from satisfying the stakeholders, organizations can comply with the regulatory requirements through GHRM. Past research has proved it that GHRM practices enhance the individual and organizational performance as well.

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